

**Lake Michigan Fisheries Team**  
**March 11, 2005**  
**Wells Fargo Room – Lakeshore Technical College**

**Notes –prepared by Bill Horns, approved 7/5/05**

**Present:** Mike Toney, Steve Hogler, Kevin Kapuscinski, Lee Meyers, Paul Peeters, George Boronow, Pradeep Hirethota, Steve Fajfer, Brad Eggold, Mike Kitt, Mark Opgenorth, John Janssen, Mike Donofrio.

**1. Review/approve meeting notes from December 2, 2004**

**2. Brief updates**

Time was allowed for short updates and reminders of topics of interest.

- Great Lakes Regional Collaboration.
- Office of the Great Lakes meeting notes available at [\\Central\WATERSHED](http://Central\WATERSHED).
- Sturgeon stocking plans for 2005.

**3. Work planning**

Background (from agenda). I obtained special dispensation from Sue Acre to complete Great Lakes work planning (Objective 18, Special Projects – Great Lakes) after the March 10 deadline, so we have to conclude this during the meeting. I hope to have most or all of it settled by e-mail before we start.

Action. The Team accepted project funding allocations recommended by Bill Horns. There was one loose end relating to funding Great Lakes travel. Bill subsequently altered his recommended allocations to fund Great Lakes travel and reinstate funding for a Milwaukee River walleye survey, and advanced the revised recommendation for review by Mike Staggs and the FH Section Chiefs.

**4. Cormorants**

Background (from agenda). Paul Peeters attended a meeting convened last week by the USFWS to discuss cormorant research and control in the Great Lakes region. By next spring we may have a pretty good idea from the ongoing DNR-funded research whether cormorants are in fact suppressing yellow perch recruitment. If the verdict is “guilty”, we will want to be ready to take action, so some discussion of how to lay the groundwork for that is in order. Also, Mike Staggs has said that if based on present data it appears that the 2003 yellow perch year class is threatened, he is willing to consider initiating a control program during 2005. There is an informal Department cormorant team with members from fisheries, wildlife, and endangered resources. It is likely that any cormorant control proposal would be reviewed by all three of those programs.

Action. Paul Peeters led a discussion of this issue. Bill agreed to contact John Netto to ask if the updated Green Bay yellow perch model can be used to assess the significance of the 2004 data from the DNR-funded research. Bill and Paul agreed to convene the ad hoc cormorant team to discuss steps needed to prepare for a possible control program.

**5. Walleyes and brown trout in Milwaukee and Marinette**

Background (from agenda). Because of the controversy surrounding the Milwaukee River walleye restoration program and concerns in the Marinette area about the affect walleye may be having on brown trout, some discussion by the LMFT is in order.

Action. Brad Eggold led a wide-ranging discussion of the issue. Steve Hogler suggested that brown trout harvests are down in all areas, regardless of whether they were stocked around walleye. Other changes in the system that might affect brown trout were discussed. Mike Toney asked if stocking

browns elsewhere in northern Green Bay (possibly Egg Harbor) would avoid walleye predation on the young fish in the Menominee River area and help restore summer brown trout fishing in Green Bay. The discussion included speculation about how and whether altering brown trout stocking dates might improve their survival, including possibly reducing walleye predation. When the renovations to Wild Rose SFH are completed, we will have more flexibility regarding the time of stocking brown trout.

## **6. Preparation for lakewide stocking conference**

Background (from agenda). The lakewide stocking conference is scheduled for April 9, 2005, in Benton Harbor, MI. It will be preceded by the Lake Michigan Committees 5-year State of the Lake (SOL) conference in late March, in Ypsilanti, MI. The SOL conference will give us good updates in preparation for the stocking conference. Data presented at the SOL conference and again at the lakewide stocking conference may justify stocking reductions. Because of the importance of this issue to Wisconsin anglers, and because few members of the interested public will be able to make the trip to Michigan, I think it would be a good idea to hold a public information meeting one day or evening between March 28 and April 6. At that time we can relay information presented at the SOL conference and get comments from people in preparation for the lakewide stocking conference. It may be that the available data point to cutting stocking even in 2005, although Michigan appears unwilling to consider that option.

Action. The Team decided against holding a public meeting in Wisconsin between the SOL Conference and the Benton Harbor stocking conference. It was agreed to hold a LMFT meeting (with Mike Staggs and Steve Hewett strongly encouraged to attend) between March 28 and April 7 to review what had been learned at the SOL Conference and develop a strategy for the Benton Harbor conference and beyond regarding how to approach adjusting stocking levels. It was also agreed that a public meeting in conjunction with a LMFF meeting would be appropriate after the April 9 Benton Harbor stocking conference.

## **7. Walleye regulations in Green Bay**

Background (from agenda). In 2003 a proposal to revise walleye regulations in Wisconsin and Michigan waters in the Marinette vicinity was unsuccessfully introduced. Recently, following numerous conversations, a new proposal has been developed.

Action. Mike Donofrio reviewed the new proposal. Bill Horns was asked to attempt to bring about a meeting between Mike Staggs and/or Steve Hewett with the appropriate MDNR person in order to gain approval for the new proposal so rule-making can move forward.

## **8. Great Lakes spotted muskies**

Background (from agenda). In 2005, we will gather population and fish health information from Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources regarding potential stock enhancement of our Great Lakes spotted muskie population. We'll also obtain background fish health information from our muskie fishery in the Fox River. Mike Donofrio would like the Team's comments on the 2005 schedule and protocol.

Action. Mike Donofrio initiated the discussion and distributed additional information. Kevin argued that we need written guidelines regarding the use of Great Lakes strain spotted muskies. He stated that Green Bay has not reached its capacity to hold muskies and, therefore, that if more spotted muskies become available it would be better to stock them in Green Bay rather than in some of the inland areas that have requested them. Kevin also requested and received the Team's endorsement of a proposal to use available NRDA funds (subject to agreement from Mark Holey) to assess health of potential Canadian sources of muskellunge eggs.

## **9. Door County smallmouth bass**

Background (from agenda). At the last LMFT meeting, Mike Toney was asked to complete analysis of 2004 bass data collected around Door County and report findings to team. Done. Looking for guidance from team on best method for communicating conclusions to general public, including getting feedback on their desires, if any, for possible rule change.

Action. Mike presented a summary of available data on smallmouth bass in Sturgeon Bay, Little Sturgeon Bay, and Rowley Bay. He will prepare a new document on this subject to be put on our Lake Michigan web page and will work on a press release on the subject.

## **10. Arlee and Kamloops rainbow trout**

Background (from agenda). We obtain Arlee broodstock from the FWS (Ennis National Fish Hatchery) and Kamloops broodstock from Minnesota. By March 21 we must decide how many Arlee eggs we want to request from the FWS in December 2006, and for what purpose. Randy has put in a place-holder for 95,000 production eggs (to be used for stocking fish for fishing) and 50,000 broodstock eggs (to be used to create a captive or feral brood stock). The longer-term questions are whether we want to create either an Arlee or Kamloops broodstock, and, if so, what we would be willing to give up for it. It would be possible to create a captive brood stock held at Wild Rose, but not until that hatchery is renovated. If a feral brood stock is created, we would probably have to give up one of the steelhead strains.

Action. The Team suggested that we request eggs for December 2006.

## **11. Next meeting date and location**

The next meeting will be after the SOL Conference (March 22-23) and before the Benton Harbor stocking conference (April 9). I'll try to set it up at the Lakeshore Technical College.